
Texas Department of Health

The Commissioner's Report to the Board of Health

June 12, 2003

Hot Topics



Legislative session ends June 2

The 78th Texas Legislature adjourned on Tuesday, June 2. A total of 5,592 bills were filed in the session; 1,382 were enrolled at the close. Gov. Rick Perry has a deadline of June 22 to sign or veto legislation. Ten of the department's 14 initiatives passed. TDH has tracked a total of 777 bills through the session and continues to track 126 pieces of legislation. The state budget has been signed by the governor, but has not yet been certified by the comptroller. *For more information, contact Jayne Nussbaum, Director of the Office of Governmental Relations, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 7263, or e-mail jayne.nussbaum@tdh.state.tx.us*



Legislation creates new Department of State Health Services

In addition to the budget, the most important piece of legislation from the legislative session is House Bill 2292. This bill will have a dramatic effect on the alignment of agencies in the Texas health and human services system. The Health and Human Services Commission is charged with developing a plan for transition, due Dec. 1, 2003. The plan will provide additional details on how and when the transition will occur.

Among other actions, this legislation consolidates the 11 health and human service agencies into four new groups. Once the transition is complete, the public health programs of TDH will be operated by a new agency to be known as the Texas Department of State Health Services. The commissioner for the new agency will be appointed by the executive commissioner of Health and Human Services Commission, with the approval of the governor. Once it is fully functional, the new agency will also operate mental health and substance-abuse programs. The governor will appoint a council of nine members to provide recommendations to the executive commissioner of HHSC and to the commissioner of TDSHS.

In addition, HHSC will continue to consolidate administrative services, as it has for the past few years. HB 2292 expands the services that will be centralized at HHSC. It also names HHSC as the state agency at which Medicaid programs will be operated. *For more information, contact Jayne Nussbaum, Director of the Office of Governmental Relations, at (512) 458-7263 or e-mail jayne.nussbaum@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Fiscal reorganization addresses auditors' findings

On June 1, the positions of 52 employees in three Fiscal Division units—the entire staff of the Accounts Payable Section and the Cash Management Unit and Reconciliations

Unit in the General Ledger Section—were eliminated. Sixty-eight new positions were created. All 52 employees applied for the new positions; of these, 49 were hired, and the remaining three are on RIF status. Sixteen of the 68 new positions remain to be filled. These 16 postings are open to applications from employees in the Health and Human Services Commission agencies. This reorganization follows both internal audits and audits conducted by the State Auditor's Office, all of which pointed out the need to improve fiscal efficiency, quality assurance, performance, and customer service. *For more information, contact Machele Pharr, Chief Financial Officer, at (512) 458-7640 or e-mail machele.pharr@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Bureau of Vital Statistics transfers to Administration

Effective June 1, oversight of the Bureau of Vital Statistics will be transferred from the associate commissioner for Consumer Health Protection to the deputy commissioner for Administration. The deputy for Administration will prioritize time and resources necessary to work with current bureau management to address business process improvement, customer service, and audit findings. This transfer will also facilitate further review and potential consolidation of health data and statistical information. The deputy for Administration will develop a plan to ensure that policy and resource decisions can be addressed in a timely manner. *For more information, contact Gary Bego, Deputy Commissioner for Administration, at (512) 458-7150 or e-mail gary.bego@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Human Resources staff consolidated at HHSC June 1

Seventy Human Resources staff, including the TDH risk manager and safety officer, became HHSC employees as of June 1, 2003. This is the first consolidation of administrative functions outlined for Texas health and human service agencies. A TDH employee, Sharon Brewer, has been named acting director of the HHSC Human Resources. *For more information, please contact Patsy Evans, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-2357, or e-mail patsy.evans@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Travis County man first 'probable' SARS case in Texas

An adult male from Travis County who traveled to Toronto in mid-May and became ill after returning to Texas is the first from the state to be counted as a "probable" SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) case by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As of June 10, the CDC reports 319 "suspect" and 69 "probable" cases of SARS in the United States. CDC also reports that laboratory tests so far have detected evidence of SARS-associated coronavirus in only seven of the 69 probable cases. The 69 probable cases are from 26 states.

The other eight possibilities reported from Texas over the past three months were classified as "suspect." All have recovered. TDH officials said the main criterion used to distinguish "probable" cases from "suspect" cases is pneumonia. The Travis County man was not hospitalized and is reportedly doing well, recovering in isolation at home.

More information about SARS is available on the Web at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars. CDC updates a state-by-state Web listing of case counts each workday. *For more information, contact Neil Pascoe, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail neil.pascoe@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Monkeypox spurs ban on African rodents, commerce in prairie dogs

The U.S. Department of Health and Human services on Wednesday banned the importation of certain African rats due to their connection with the spread of the monkeypox virus. In addition, HHS is now prohibiting the sale, transport, and distribution of prairie dogs in the United States. TDH and numerous federal, state, and local agencies in multiple states are continuing to investigate an outbreak of monkeypox in several people in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana.

Health authorities believe most of the people contracted the monkeypox virus from recently acquired pet prairie dogs, which are believed to have been infected by one or more Gambian rats imported from Africa for sale as pets. (The disease had never been found in the Western Hemisphere but is common in parts of Africa.)

Some of the infected prairie dogs sold in the Midwest may have come from a Texas distributor, but it is unclear where they originated. Officials are tracking a shipment of Gambian rats received by another Texas distributor in early April. So far, investigators have not determined that the prairie dogs and Gambian rats were ever together while in Texas, suggesting that infection of the prairie dogs occurred outside the state.

There have been no reports of monkeypox in humans or animals in Texas yet, and officials say there is nothing to indicate that it is in Texas' wild prairie-dog populations. TDH advises anyone who has obtained prairie dogs, Gambian rats, or other exotic pets from a pet store, distributor, or in a pet swap meet to be alert for signs of illness in the animals and to be especially alert for symptoms of monkeypox in people who have had contact with the animals.

The monkeypox virus is from the same group of viruses (orthopoxviruses) as the virus that causes smallpox, but it is not nearly as severe or life-threatening. More information about monkeypox is available at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/monkeypox/index.htm. For more information, contact Joe Garrett, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7225 or e-mail joe.garrett@tdh.state.tx.us.



Smallpox vaccinations top 4,000

Through June 6, some 4,208 public health response team members, hospital-based medical care personnel, and federal employees have been vaccinated in Phase I of the smallpox-vaccination program in Texas. Texas has vaccinated more people than any other state, according to the latest CDC posting. The Texas total includes 2,931 hospital-based personnel with 307 Texas hospitals. Four "moderate to severe" (non life-threatening) adverse events have occurred among the 4,208 vaccinees. All have recovered. Vaccinations in Texas began Feb. 13 and are continuing. For more information, contact Linda C. Chambers, Office of State Epidemiologist, at (512) 458-7219 or e-mail linda.chambers@tdh.state.tx.us.



Dallas County reports West Nile virus in human

Dallas County has reported a suspected case of West Nile virus in a human, but TDH has not yet confirmed the case. This is the first report of a possible human infection in 2003.

TDH is encouraging residents to protect themselves against the West Nile virus by remembering the four D's: drain, dress, DEET, and dusk/dawn:

- Drain standing water.
- Use an insect repellent containing DEET.
- Dress in long sleeves and pants when feasible.
- Stay indoors around dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are more active.

In 2002, the first year West Nile was found in Texas, the virus was detected in humans, birds, mosquitoes, or horses in 213 of Texas' 254 counties. There were 202 human cases, including 13 deaths. In 2003, West Nile has been detected in four birds in Harris County and in a horse in Calhoun County. No human cases have been confirmed in Texas. *For more information, contact Joe Garrett, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7225 or e-mail joe.garrett@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Influenza season appears at an end

TDH reported "sporadic" influenza activity for the week ending May 17. No influenza activity was recorded for May, the first time since late October that no influenza cases were reported in the state. Though medical professionals are not required to report influenza in Texas, TDH relies on several influenza surveillance sites around the state to assess flu activity. Officially, flu season runs through the end of May. *For more information, contact Peggy Wright, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail peggy.wright@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Disaster Coordinating Council Meets

An organizational meeting of the Department's Disaster Coordinating Council (DCC) was held June 11. Established to help facilitate the coordination of the provision of health and medical services in the event of a major disaster or emergency, the DCC is a critical component of the Department's public health preparedness efforts. Under the guidance of the Office of Emergency Preparedness, members of the DCC will provide the representation necessary in the event the Department needs to activate the Emergency Support Center (ESC) that serves as the agency's emergency operations center during all major public health response and recovery efforts. With representation from every major organizational unit of the Department, the DCC will play a key role in future efforts to improve our ability to respond to disasters or disease outbreaks.

The agenda featured presentations by Executive Deputy Commissioner Dr. Nick Curry, Ron Hilliard with the Office of the State Epidemiologist, Glen Bason with the Health Alert Network, Robert Free and Mike Rutherford with the Bureau of Radiation Control, John Burlinson with the Bureau of Resource Management and members of the Office of Emergency Preparedness. Increasingly, our ability to respond quickly, thoroughly and effectively during emergencies or disasters will be greatly aided by our preparedness efforts and the DCC will take the lead in enhancing this aspect of the Texas Department of Health's operations. *For more information on the DCC, contact Rolando Garza at (512) 458-7126 or e-mail rolando.garza@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TDH tobacco awareness having an impact on adult smokers

The TDH integrated tobacco awareness campaign is having an impact on smokers in its pilot area. The University of Texas School of Public Health has just completed a report on the TDH Tobacco Pilot Program and the effects the program has had on adult tobacco use. By comparing smokers in other parts of the state to smokers in the pilot region, the study found that the smokers in the pilot region reported more awareness of the effects of tobacco use, and greater utilization of telephone counseling services, in addition to higher rates of cessation.

The Tobacco Prevention Pilot activities in Regions 5 and 6 were associated with a two times greater rate of reduction in tobacco use than the reduction that was observed in other parts of Texas (21 percent relative reduction), yielding approximately 90,000 fewer smokers than would be expected if pilot activities had not been implemented. More than 12,000 smokers received advice or counseling from the American Cancer Society (ACS) telephone service. The ACS service tripled (39 percent vs. 11 percent) the one-year maintained cessation rate in a study group of 420 young adults 18-25 years of age. *For more information, contact Philip Huang, Bureau of Chronic Disease and Tobacco Prevention, at (512) 458-7500 or e-mail philip.huang@tdh.state.tx.us.*



HIV medications program meets with Title I Eligible Metropolitan Areas (EMA)

Two members of the Board of Health, as well as the associate commissioner for Disease Control and Prevention, the chief of the Bureau of HIV and STD Prevention, the director of the HIV/STD Clinical Resources Division, and the manager of the Texas HIV Medication Program (THMP) met with representatives of the five Texas Ryan White Title I cities at their quarterly meeting. Also attending the meeting was the new HRSA Title I/II/III project officer for Texas. The associate commissioner described the budgetary needs of the THMP, and possible plans to redirect Title II funds to the THMP. Title I representatives provided feedback on several matters including the THMP budget needs and the concerns regarding the Title II “needs assessment process” currently being utilized statewide.

A stakeholder workgroup, including Title I and II representatives, consumers, and others is being formed to guide the implementation of changes to the THMP eligibility, based on decisions to be made by the Board of Health. *For more information, contact Linda S. Moore, HIV/STD Clinical Resources Division, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail at linda.moore@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Disease Outbreaks



Chicken pox case at MHMR Facility

A case of chicken pox at an MHMR facility in Region 4 was reported on Wednesday, April 16. A 39-year-old male resident had rash onset on April 14. Diagnosis was made on April 16 and he was isolated at that time. Because resident clients are not able to give a reliable history of previous chicken-pox infection, possible contacts were tested for chicken-pox immunity with a varicella IgG test. That day, the state school identified possible contacts and drew blood specimens from 51 clients and one staff member; Region 4 staff shipped the specimens overnight by bus to the TDH laboratory; and the laboratory received the specimens the next morning and processed and tested them that

day. Results were reported that afternoon in time for appropriate vaccination (recommended within five days of exposure) or VZIG prophylaxis (recommended within four days for immuno-compromised persons and pregnant women). Three additional specimens were shipped on Thursday and were tested Friday along with the repeat test on one equivocal specimen. Fortunately, all specimens were reactive for varicella IgG. This effort exemplifies an efficient public-health team response. *For more information, contact Laura Tabony or David Bastis, Immunization Division, Surveillance and Epidemiology Program, at (512) 458-7284 or e-mail laura.tabony@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Tetanus infection in Region 9

In April, a 39-year-old male was diagnosed as having tetanus at a hospital in Region 9. The patient is employed in the oil industry, and he and his wife travel from site to site and do not maintain a permanent residence. He reported a laceration to his arm while working on a car six days prior to his first ER visit. He washed the wound with peroxide and two days later saw a physician in Mexico because of swelling, redness, and warmth at the injury site. The wound was stitched and he started taking dicloxacillin, but discontinued the antibiotic after two days due to nausea. He reported to an ER in Pecos County because he was experiencing mild trismus and pain in the right jaw and neck. He was treated with tetanus toxoid and human tetanus immune globulin (TIG). The next day he presented at the ER again with a complaint of cramps and spasms in his left arm and was given another dose of TIG, intubated, and transferred to an Ector County hospital for further assessment. He received further antibiotic treatment and was released the following day. He reported receiving a tetanus shot about two years earlier due to another injury. He was born in Mexico and does not know if he ever had a primary series of tetanus vaccination. *For more information, contact Laura Tabony or David Bastis, Immunization Division, Surveillance and Epidemiology Program, at (512) 458-7284 or e-mail laura.tabony@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Pertussis death in Region 7

Region 7 reported a 27-day-old female died from pertussis on April 30. She was seen at two hospitals in Austin on April 27. A DFA smear was positive for pertussis and was later confirmed by a positive culture result. On April 29 she was transferred to a hospital in San Antonio and died there the following day. She had been seen at a physician's office on April 9 and April 22 with cough, congestion, and vomiting after coughing. Her mother had been seen in January at a hospital in Austin with a cough complaint and in February had received Zithromax for an illness. When she was admitted for the birth, she was still coughing. *For more information, contact Laura Tabony or David Bastis, Immunization Division, Surveillance and Epidemiology Program, at (512) 458-7284 or e-mail laura.tabony@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Training



Pharmacy Inventory Control System (PICS) Update

May Implementation Training has been completed in Region 11. The final field training was to be completed in Region 2/3 the week of May 19. Implementation of PICS is proceeding in Regions 6/5 with all programs except Immunizations, which will follow about October with the parallel implementation of TWICES.

Increased emphasis is being placed on the PICS project at this time, as the contractor's involvement will be winding down by mid-July 2003. Extra clarification of the systems-specific capabilities are to be identified to ensure that it can be fully operational upon implementation. Special attention is being given to all necessary interface requirements.

For more information, contact Dinny Smith, Pharmacy Division, at (512) 458-7500 or e-mail dinny.smith@tdh.state.tx.us.



TDH staff support language services need

Thirty-nine TDH staff members in the Central Office have offered their volunteer assistance when the agency needs to communicate with clients who speak languages other than English. These staff members speak one or more of 23 languages, including, Vietnamese, French, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Taiwanese, Hindi, Swahili, among others. A translation-interpretation workshop was provided for these volunteers in June.

For more information, contact Eddie Aurispa, manager of Language Services at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-3405, or email eddie.aurispa@tdh.state.tx.us.



Filming of mock inspection for national training

The Manufactured Foods Division staff arranged and actively participated in the videotaping of a mock inspection of a large food warehouse, funded by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control to the Association of Food and Drug Officials. The mock inspection is the last piece of training being developed for a three-day course that will be presented nationwide to state and local food-safety officials as a part of the Food and Drug Administration's Office of Regulatory Affairs – University ("ORA-U") training. "ORA-U" itself consists of more than 60 online training modules in topics related to conducting food-safety inspections, food and drug laws and regulations, communications, writing skills, and other areas important to conducting proper inspections. The final face-to-face course is a culmination of all of the online training. The H.E.B. Grocery Company of San Antonio agreed to the use of their facilities for the taping of the mock inspection. This was accomplished at no cost to TDH, but will be of great benefit to the training of our state and local food inspectors in the near future, bringing consistency and uniformity to the inspections. *For more information, contact Julie Loera, Manufactured Foods Division, at (512) 719-0243, ext. 444, or e-mail julie.loera@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Retail Foods Division to hold training course

The Retail Foods Division has been approved for a FDA Training Course to be held in San Antonio Aug. 19-21. The course, entitled "Managing Food Safety," will be for field inspectors and supervisors and will address such issues as Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) inspection principles, advances in technology, and communication skills for inspectors. Fifty state and local inspectors will be invited to attend. *For more information, contact Steve McAndrew, Retail Foods Division, at (512) 719-0232, ext. 406, or e-mail steve.mcandrew@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Administration



Data workgroup underway

The Data Workgroup of the Texas State Strategic Health Partnership has begun working. Patricia Gail Bray, Ph.D. (Director of Research, St. Luke's Episcopal Health Charities) is the co-chair of the workgroup. Mike Gilliam, Jr., M.S.W., M.P.H. (director of TDH's Center for Health Statistics), is the other co-chair. The goal for the workgroup is "by 2010, the Texas public health system partners will be informed by, and make decisions based on, a statewide real-time, standardized, integrated data collection and reporting system for demographic, morbidity, mortality, and behavioral health indicators accessible at the local level which also protects the privacy of Texas." The Data Workgroup will submit a report with recommendations for how best to achieve this goal to the Public Health Improvement Steering Committee in September 2003. The Data Workgroup has representation from East Texas Area Health Education Centers, Austin/Travis County Health Department, Texas Association of Local Health Officers (TALHO), University of Texas School of Public Health, University of North Texas School of Public Health, Texas Medical Association, Health and Human Services Commission, Texas A&M State Data Center, and United Way of Texas. Gary Rutenberg, Ph.D., is the TDH delegate for the Data Goal Workgroup. *For more information, contact Mike Gilliam, Center for Health Statistics, at (512) 458-7628 or e-mail mike.gilliam@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Audits explore TDH bioterrorism funds

The Office of the Inspector General recently performed a limited-scope audit of the bioterrorism funds received by the agency. This audit was performed in a condensed time frame, and results will be forthcoming. Additionally, the State Auditor's Office is conducting an audit of the agency's contracting practice and is planning an audit on bioterrorism funds received by TDH. *For more information, contact Melanie Doyle, Contract Policy and Monitoring Division, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-2276, or e-mail melanie.doyle@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Information Systems (IS) Security Risk Assessment Program

Texas Administrative Code Chapter 202, Information Security Standards, requires that the TDH Information Resources Manager (IRM) ensure that a security-risk analysis of information resources be performed and documented. The results are to be presented to the agency head (or designated representative), at least on an annual basis. The TDH Information Security Risk Assessment Program emphasizes four key strategies: Independent Assessments; Monitoring and Reporting; Best Practices Surveys; and Awareness Training. All four strategies are in process. The independent network assessment is scheduled for June-July 2003. The annual IS Risk Assessment Report is scheduled for completion prior to December 2003. *For more information, contact Tom Thornton, Information Systems, at (512) 458-7271 or e-mail tom.thornton@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Awards



Phil Huang receives national award for excellence

The Association of State and Territorial Chronic Disease Program Directors presented Dr. Phil Huang with its Award for Excellence in the Prevention and Control of Chronic

Disease. This national award recognizes the distinguished service of an individual in the public health field who has advanced knowledge and practice in reducing the burden of chronic disease. For more information, contact Philip Huang, Bureau of Chronic Disease and Tobacco Prevention, at (512) 458-7500 or e-mail philip.huang@tdh.state.tx.us.

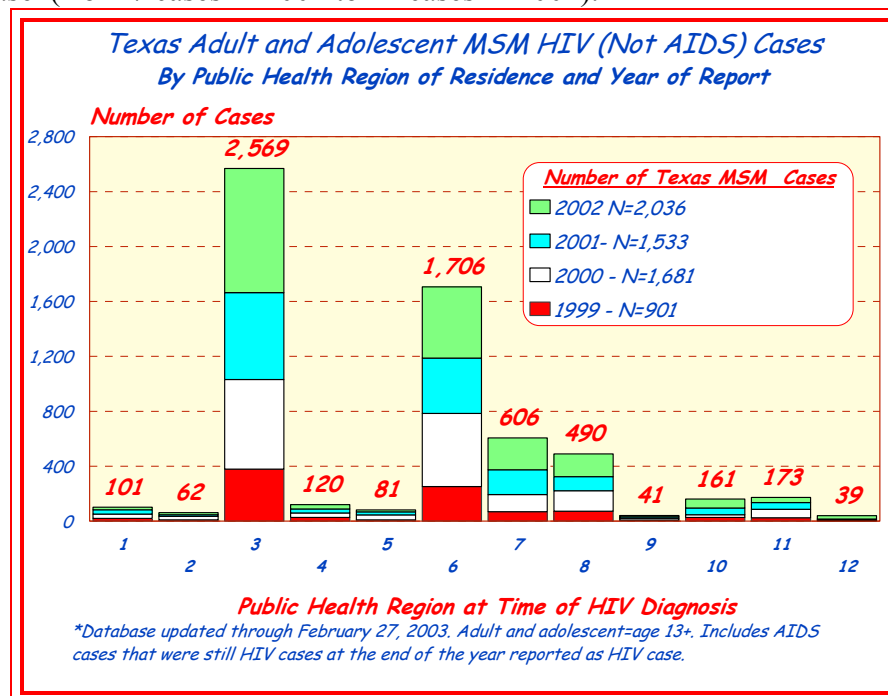
Program Updates



Update on Texas HIV and AIDS Cases

In 2001, male-to-male sex (MSM) accounted for only 50 percent of the total Texas adult and adolescent male HIV (not AIDS) cases; by 2002, that proportion had risen to 57 percent, a matter for concern considering independent reports of an increase in risk-taking behavior in this population. In 2000, a similar phenomenon was observed, but the rise between 1999 and 2000 from 901 HIV (not AIDS) cases to 1,681 such cases was attributable, in large part, to a change in reporting methods. By 2001 MSM cases had stabilized, with 1,533 cases in Texas. However, by 2002, and with no additional change in reporting methods, HIV infections rose to 2,036 among men who have sex with men. MSM cases rose in eight of the 12* Public Health Regions (PHR), with the greatest change seen in highly urban regions and in cases reported from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. From 2001 to 2002, the following increases were observed in MSM HIV (not AIDS) cases:

- PHR 8, which includes San Antonio, a 62 percent increase
- PHR 3, containing Dallas and Fort Worth, a 42 percent increase
- PHR 10, anchored by El Paso, a 33 percent increase
- PHR 6 (Houston), a 29 percent increase
- PHR 7 (Austin), a 28 percent increase
- PHR 12, cases reported by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, a 224 percent increase (from 7 cases in 2001 to 24 cases in 2002).



*HIV and AIDS cases reported from TDCJ are treated as a 12th public health region for the purposes of analysis. *For more information, contact Sharon K. Melville, HIV/STD Epidemiology Division, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail sharon.melville@tdh.state.tx.us.*



EPA completes Superfund cleanup

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) completed its Superfund cleanup action at the Gulf Nuclear of Louisiana facility in Webster on May 8. Spending more than \$15 million to decontaminate the site, a large quantity of radioactive material was removed, which conceivably could have been used to make a radiological-dispersion device, or “dirty bomb.” The radioactive material has been transferred to disposal sites in Utah and South Carolina and a waste-storage facility in Andrews, Texas. All shielding materials and portable buildings have been removed from the site, and non-radioactive waste materials have been transferred to a local landfill for disposal. The EPA and the Bureau of Radiation Control will perform final environmental surveys at the site in early June. It is anticipated that the site will be released for unrestricted use after laboratory results are received and analyzed. Bureau of Radiation Control staff have assisted the EPA and its contractors throughout the cleanup. *For more information, contact Richard Ratliff, Bureau of Radiation Control, at (512) 834-6679 or e-mail richard.ratliff@tdh.state.tx.us or Arthur Tate, Bureau of Radiation Control, at (512) 834-6629 or e-mail arthur.tate@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TDH, City of Garland work on asbestos abatement study

The Asbestos Branch is working with the City of Garland to help them determine the best way to abate more than 100 nuisance apartments prior to demolition. We have suggested the possibility that they work in concert with the City of Fort Worth, which is doing a study under the EPA project Excellence and Leadership (XL). This study will determine the feasibility of a new abatement method that significantly reduces the cost of abatement by simply wetting the entire structure’s surfaces and then demolishing the structure. We are hoping that this can be done to the benefit of both Fort Worth and Garland. If the study is successful, it would present a more cost-effective method of abating asbestos for demolitions and would help encourage building owners to comply with the rules while preventing worker and public exposure to asbestos. *For more information, contact Todd Wingler, Asbestos Branch, at (512) 834-6600, ext. 2462, or e-mail todd.wingler@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Meat sold to schools subject to regulation

Meat Safety Assurance (MSA) Division Compliance Officers in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex and in the Austin area identified catering firms supplying school-system cafeterias with entrees containing meat. This type of product, unless served by the catering firm, is subject to regulation under the Texas Meat and Poultry Inspection Act (TxMPIA). The identified firms are currently selling the products to schools without benefit of inspection under the TxMPIA or Federal Meat and Poultry Acts. The Meat Safety Assurance Division will work to bring these establishments into compliance before the beginning of next school year. There are allegedly similar firms in the Houston area, and potentially firms statewide, that will be investigated to determine whether they are in compliance with or in violation of the TxMPIA. *For more information, contact Lee Jan, Meat Safety Assurance Division, at (512) 719-0205 or e-mail lee.jan@tdh.state.tx.us.*



BVS to begin new registration and customer service systems

The Bureau of Vital Statistics contracted with Genesis Systems Incorporated of Lewistown, Pennsylvania to design new systems for birth registration and customer service. The birth system will be Web-enabled, with online edits and prompts creating a more timely and complete registration process. The customer-service system will be integrated with the birth system, and will have the ability to handle customer requests via the use of Texas Online. The systems will be implemented by Sept. 1. *For more information, contact Debra F. Owens, Vital Statistics, at (512) 458-7366 or e-mail debra.owens@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Emergency medical services for children grant awarded to Texas

Texas was awarded an Emergency Medical Services for Children (EMSC) grant from the Health Resources Services Administration in the amount of \$300,000 for three years. The two major goals of this grant are to standardize the care of the pediatric trauma patient by establishing minimum pediatric trauma care and emergency care standards in each Regional EMS/Trauma System and to augment the ability of underserved areas to offer pediatric education courses for emergency health-care providers by increasing the number of pediatric course instructors. *For more information, contact Greg Wilburn, Emergency Health Care Systems, Bureau of Emergency Management, (512) 834-6700 or e-mail greg.wilburn@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Women and diabetes town hall meeting set for satellite broadcast

TDH hosted the Women and Diabetes Town Hall Meeting satellite broadcast, sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Coordinating Committee on Women's Health and the American Diabetes Association on May 20. Speakers at the Town Hall Meeting reported that, of 17 million people in the United States living with diabetes, 9.1 million are women. Presentations included information on diabetes prevention and maintenance programs. Town Hall speakers include U.S. representatives from the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues and the Diabetes Caucus, the largest congressional caucus. Members of the TDH Perinatal Health Program and the Diabetes Program will meet in the next few weeks to review Texas data around women and diabetes, including gestational diabetes, and to identify potential areas of collaboration. *For more information, contact Chan McDermott, Bureau of Women's Health, at (512) 458-7796 or e-mail chan.mcdermott@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas Vaccine for Children (TVFC) presents registry information to Driscoll Children's Health Plan

ImmTrac program staff met with Driscoll Children's Health Plan (DCHP) medical directors on May 13 to discuss implementation of the ImmTrac application and/or electronic medical record (EMR) software in all DCHP-participating clinics.

A pilot project at two DCHP-participating clinics will be set up in June. EMR software will be installed at one clinic and the ImmTrac application at the other. Clinic staff will be evaluating the ImmTrac application for ease of use and testing the EMR's export capability for submission of data to ImmTrac. *For more information, contact Claude Longoria or Adriana Rhames, Immunization Division, ImmTrac Registry, at (512) 458-7284 or e-mail claudelongoria@tdh.state.tx.us or adriana.rhames@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Pilot test set for TB syringes

A representative of the TB Elimination Division attended the Safety Engineered Sharps Screening Workshop held at the TDH on April 25. As a result of that meeting, pilot tests are being developed for the safety-engineered tuberculin syringes manufactured by Vanish Point and Portex. The tests are being conducted in Region 7 and Region 4/5N. The TB Program in Region 1 would like to pilot-test the ICU Medical Puncture Guard blood-collection needle. *For more information, contact Ann Tyree, TB Elimination Division, (512) 458-7447 or e-mail ann.tyree@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TDH begins implementation of new TB treatment guidelines

On April 28, the TB Elimination Division held a meeting of experts in TB treatment and control to discuss implementation in Texas of the new TB treatment guidelines published by the American Thoracic Society, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Infectious Disease Society of America. Discussions via e-mail are continuing to take place to clarify some issues regarding the best practices to implement in Texas. *For more information, contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TB elimination division conducts program reviews

On May 12-13, members of the TB Elimination Division participated in a TB program review for Galveston County. On May 14-16, members of the TB Elimination Division participated in a TB program review for Harris County. This review is conducted to assess the health department's surveillance, containment, and program assessment for tuberculosis treatment and control. Surveillance activities are reviewed to determine program capability in case finding, referral, and initiation of appropriate therapy and containment activities including treatment regimens, identification and examination of contacts, initiation of directly observed therapy (DOT) for cases and suspects and directly observed preventive therapy (DOPT) for high-risk contacts, and preventive therapy for positive reactors. A general review of clinic operations, program policies, and procedures are also included in this exercise. *For more information, contact Emmanuel Iroanya, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail emmanuel.iroanya@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Ten Against TB (TATB) holds steering committee meeting

Members of the TB Elimination Division attended a meeting of the TATB Technical and Executive Committees on May 26 and a meeting of the TATB Steering Council on May 27. Both meetings were held in San Diego, Calif. TATB's role is to provide technical assistance on TB to the Border Health Commission and to provide leadership in assessing needs, raising funds, and allocating resources. The Executive Committee would be assumed by the Border Health Commission, and TATB would not have any role at the political level (state health officers and federal levels). The Commission would only facilitate communication with all the state health officers and the federal level, but TATB would maintain the political role through the Executive Committee and the two co-chairs, who will continue to be state health officers.

During the Steering Council meeting, Mauricio Guerrero of the Francis Curry Center updated the group on the four training courses that will take place during the next months, a joint project by TATB/Curry Center. Dr. Andrés Hernandez (from Mexico

City), Dr. Fernando Gonzalez (El Paso/Cd.Juarez), Dr. Kathy Moser, and Mr. Alberto Colorado (San Diego) also updated the group on the use of the TB card in their respective regions. *For more information contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us or Jose Moreira, TB Elimination Division, (512) 458-7447 or e-mail jose.moreira@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Zoonosis to sponsor conference on diseases in nature transmissible to man

This conference is sponsored by the Zoonosis Control Division and is scheduled for June 25-27 in Amarillo. Emerging diseases in nature are still on the increase. Professionals in the medical and veterinary communities, as well as sanitarians, researchers, and other public health professionals, need to be aware of the health hazards posed by zoonotic diseases. This conference fills the need by presenting the most current information available on these transmissible diseases. The featured speaker at this year's J.V. Irons Luncheon lecture is Kelley J. Donham, M.S., D.V.M., director of Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health, College of Public Health, University of Iowa. *For more information, contact Jim Schuermann, Zoonosis Control Division, at (512) 458-7255 or e-mail jim.schuermann@tdh.state.tx.us.*



HIV/STD convenes African-American advisory workgroup (AAAW)

The Bureau of HIV and STD Prevention convened the last meeting of the AAAW. The role of the AAAW is to assist the bureau in responding to the recommendations in the monograph *HIV/AIDS: African American Perspectives and Recommendations for State and Local AIDS Directors and Health Departments*, created by the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD). At this meeting, the AAAW made a final list of recommendations to the bureau, which included an action plan with assignments for the workgroup members and bureau staff. The AAAW decided to continue meeting, with limited support from the bureau, and elected two workgroup members as co-chairs for the group. *For more information, contact Larry Cuellar, Bureau of HIV and STD Prevention, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail larry.cuellar@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TDH receives grant award for Ryan White CARE Act Title II

The Bureau of HIV and STD Prevention received the Notice of Grant Award for Ryan White CARE Act Title II funds from the Health Resources and Services Administration. For the 2003 federal fiscal year, TDH received \$68,629,133 in federal funds (\$20,194,363 in base funds and \$48,434,770 for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program) with a required state match of \$34,314,567. These amounts reflect a \$4,758,735 increase in federal funding for Texas' AIDS Drug Assistance Program. The revised budget and SF-424 have been submitted. *For more information, contact Michelle Porters, Bureau of HIV and STD Prevention, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail michelle.porter@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas Diabetes Council earns award of merit

The Austin Chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators recognized Donna Jones and the Texas Diabetes Council, TDH, with an Award of Merit for the diabetes state plan, "Toward a Texas Free of Diabetes" on May 6 in the category of Eternal Annual Reports. *For more information, contact Jan Ozias, Texas Diabetes Program/Council, at (512) 458-7490 or e-mail jan.ozias@tdh.state.tx.us.*



State agencies participating in physical activity challenge

Six agencies are participating in the first annual Texas State Agency Physical Activity Challenge, which is a 10-week program designed to provide employees the opportunity to engage in physical activities that will motivate them to adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle. This program motivates employees to form teams and set realistic personal goals for physical activity. It rewards employees who achieve their goals individually and as a team. Participating agencies include the Texas Cancer Council, the Texas Water Development Board of Professional Engineers, and TDH. *For more information, contact Jennifer Smith, Cardiovascular Health and Wellness Program, at (512) 458-7670 or e-mail jennifer.smith@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Employee Fitness Survey

The Bureau of Chronic Disease and Tobacco Prevention recently completed analysis of the first Employee Fitness Survey of TDH employees. Overall, approximately 32 percent of TDH employees have a normal body weight, 35 percent engage in physical activity for at least 30 minutes on five or more days per week, 23 percent consume at least five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, and only 14 percent of TDH employees are current smokers. Differences between Austin-based employees and regional employees suggest a need for more physical-activity facilities and wellness activities in the public health region. *For more information, contact Philip Huang, Bureau of Chronic Disease and Tobacco Prevention, at (512) 458-7500 or e-mail philip.huang@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Regional Updates

Public Health Region 1



Hantavirus Report for May

On May 18, a 54-year-old Caucasian male presented at an Amarillo hospital exhibiting symptoms of respiratory distress. The date of onset for symptoms was May 11. The patient was placed on a respirator and survived. He was discharged about two weeks later. His serum tested positive for hantavirus antibodies at a reference lab in New Mexico. The city of Amarillo is considering this a case of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS) while waiting for results from the CDC.

The patient's residence is near an agricultural area (open fields) but is separated from it by a major six-lane street. A survey of his residence found no evidence of rodents. He reported that his one hobby is playing golf at a local country club. His physician believes that to be the most likely point of exposure. The man stores his clubs in the clubhouse, and a survey of that site is pending.

Further testing is being done to determine if this is a *sin nombre* infection. This is case No. 22 for Texas and No. 12 for Region 1. There have been 10 deaths due to HPS in Texas (case fatality rate (CFR) of 45 percent), six of which have been in Region 1 (CFR of 50 percent). *For more information, contact James Alexander, Zoonosis Control, at (806) 767-0408 or e-mail james.alexander@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Shigella report

Region 1 has had 799 confirmed cases of shigella reported since November 2002. The majority of cases have occurred in Lubbock County (666) and Terry and Yoakum counties (81). The remaining cases have been spread out among the following counties: Potter/Randall (1), Childress (1), Floyd (19), Crosby (13), Lamb (9), Hockley (6), Garza (1), Hale (1), and Deaf Smith (1). Schoolchildren who became ill were excluded from school, and food handlers were excluded from work until they provided two negative stools. Epi staff are aggressively pursuing all new cases to ensure that proper treatment is being initiated. Health alerts and advisories were sent out to all 41 counties advising of the outbreak and providing precautionary information. *For more information, contact Barry Wilson, Immunization Program, at (806) 767-0469 or e-mail barry.wilson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Indigent Health Care Program Eligibility System Review

Region 1 County Indigent Health Care Program staff went to Cameron County in Region 11 in May to assist with the 6-percent Eligibility System Review. One hundred and fifty cases were reviewed to help ensure compliance with County Indigent Health Care policy prior to the county's accessing state-assistance funds. Each case was reviewed for eligibility components of residency, household composition, potential Medicaid status, resources, and forms. In addition, each case was reviewed for bill payment. Bill-payment components include timely receipt of bills, medical necessity, covered services, date of service, third-party resources, correct payment amount, and timely payment of bills. *For more information, contact Claudia McQueen, Indigent Health Care Program, at (806) 767-0408 or e-mail claudia.mcqueen@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Regions 4 and 5 North



Four-County Future Search

A multi-county Future Search was held in Mt. Pleasant on April 7-9. The average daily attendance was 60 individuals per day for the three-day conference. Representatives attended from Camp, Franklin, Morris, and Titus counties. These individuals represented stakeholder groups from faith-based organizations; regulatory, governmental, law-enforcement, education, and service organizations; public health providers; human-service agencies; and mental-health and disability agencies. Working together, the participants agreed on the following vision statement that they believed would help improve the health of the people of the four-county area: "In order to improve the health of people in Camp, Franklin, Morris, and Titus counties, the Future Search participants envision our communities working together to provide accessible, affordable, available, and adequate services for everyone." In order to bring about the envisioned future, 11 project action teams were formed. A thank-you letter from the manager of an affordable housing program sponsored by the area's largest industry stated: "Through your help, I have been able to provide and house a new WIC office for Camp County which will benefit hundreds of mothers and children that reside in Camp County. In addition, Future Search has also benefited me with further desire to see a fitness center developed, more affordable housing, shelters created, and a resource center created. I have found a network of others who are in similar fields with the same goals of seeing our dreams

happen to benefit our communities. Thank you, Future Search Team!” For more information, contact Paul McGaha, Regional Director, at (903) 533-5264 or e-mail paul.mcgaha@tdh.state.tx.us.

Public Health Region 7



Smallpox-Vaccination Project

Region 7 public health nurses are winding down the smallpox-vaccination project that has resulted in vaccinated teams in strategic areas that are an integral part of smallpox preparedness plans. This, however, does not suggest that public health nursing activities are slowing down in the region. Quite the contrary. The nurses continue to manage other infectious diseases as the need arises, provide training in hearing and vision certification, develop and support community relationships, and are now gearing up for busy summer school immunization clinics. Our public health nurses are the eyes and ears for public health in our communities, and the work is never done. For more information, contact Pat Collins, Region 7, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2105, or e-mail pat.collins@tdh.state.tx.us.



Rabies and West Nile Virus Presentation

On April 24, Region 7 Zoonosis Control gave a presentation on rabies and the West Nile virus to the adult volunteers of Coryell County 4-H. The audience of 50 received information on disease prevention and recognition. Coryell County has historically been affected by high numbers of cases of skunkrabies and equine West Nile Virus. On May 6, they also presented to 30 veterinarians and veterinary technicians on animal rabies and the West Nile virus. Recent domestic-animal rabies cases in the Brazos Valley area were discussed. Information on the West Nile virus, updated from the nation's experiences in 2002, was shared. Disease reporting was encouraged. For more information, contact Beverlee E. Nix, Zoonosis Control Program, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2451, or e-mail beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us.



Basic Animal-Control Officer (ACO) Training

On May 28-29, the Zoonosis Control Program hosted a Basic ACO Training Course in Temple. Thirteen students from animal-control and animal-welfare agencies attended. The students were from Bell, Bosque, Brazos, Burleson, Falls, Robertson, Travis, Washington, and Williamson counties. This course presented information on rabies control, animal-control laws, animal capture and restraint, the humane care of animals, and zoonotic diseases. For more information, contact Beverlee E. Nix, Zoonosis Control Program, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2451, or e-mail beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us.



TB Contact Investigation

The Region 7 TB Team has provided assistance with a contact investigation to the Waco McLennan Public Health District Tuberculosis Program. The Waco McLennan County Public Health District requested assistance to locate and provide TB screening and testing to the remaining 38 students identified as classmates to the TB cases. To overcome barriers identified by Waco, Regional TB selected six team members with bilingual language skills and expertise in TB screening skin testing, field investigation, and interviewing. Team members were selected from regional HIV/STD, PHN, and EMS

programs. The investigation was conducted from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. on May 12 and 14. *For more information, contact Dana Schoepf, TB Control Program, at (254) 778-6744 or e-mail dana.schoepf@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Regions 9 and 10



SARS Presentation

The regional director delivered clinical SARS presentations for health-care workers at Midland Memorial Hospital and Midland Center in Odessa. Information provided will allow workers to be better prepared to deal with any possible SARS outbreak. *For more information, contact Dr. Miguel A. Escobedo, Regional Director, at (915) 834-7680 or e-mail miguel.escobedo@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Regional Retreats

Regional administration conducted six regional staff retreats throughout the region. Retreats enable administration to provide training on the new Performance Evaluation System and to continued the process of regional strategic planning during times of transition. *For more information, contact Gale Morrow, Deputy Director, at (915) 834-7777 or e-mail gale.morrow@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Emergency Response Team (E.R.T.)

The Regional E.R.T. Team hosted a two-day Epidemiology Surveillance Training for Public Health Emergency Response Workers. Faculty from the University of Texas Public Health School of Houston, El Paso Campus, delivered the presentation. The event was limited to 50 key participants from West Texas. *For more information, contact Dr. Charles Gaiser, Emergency Response team, at (915) 834-7782 or e-mail charles.gaiser@tdh.state.tx.us.*



U.S.-Mexico Border Health Association (USMBHA)

The regional director participated in the USMBHA work meeting in San Diego, Calif. Dr. Miguel A. Escobedo became the association's president during this next working year. *For more information, contact Dr. Miguel A. Escobedo, Regional Director, at (915) 834-7680 or e-mail miguel.escobedo@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 11



Binational Medical Entomology and Geographic Information System (GIS) Workshop

The American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Mexican and U.S. chapters of the U.S.-Mexico Border Health Assnociation presented on April 9, 10, and 11 of 2003 a Binational Medical Entomology and GIS Workshop to establish a tracking system for vector mosquitos and arboviral diseases in the state of Texas and adjoining Mexican

states. For more information, contact Ramiro Gonzales, Office of Border Health, at (956) 423-0130, ext. 635, or e-mail ramiro.gonzales@tdh.state.tx.us.



Economically Distressed Areas Programs (EDAP) ‘Nuisance Findings’

Harlingen and Laredo OBH staff and General Sanitation staff documented 29 colonias for EDAP “nuisance findings” in Starr County, which will qualify them for \$15.5 million for water and wastewater improvements. For more information, contact Ramiro Gonzales, Office of Border Health, at (956) 423-0130, ext. 635, or e-mail ramiro.gonzales@tdh.state.tx.us.



Operation Lone Star 2003 planned for July

Region 11 is in preparation for Operation Lone Star 2003, planned for July 21-31 with the Texas Army National Guard as the lead agency in conjunction with Navy and Marine reservists and local agencies. For more information, contact Brian Smith, Regional Director, at (956) 423-0130, ext. 502, or e-mail brian.smith@tdh.state.tx.us.